

MEETING REPORT NO. 07

---

PROJECT:     **Town of Needham Downtown Study**

DATE:           10 January 2007

LOCATION:       Community Room, Needham Public Library

PRESENT:       Downtown Study Committee (DSC)

Jack Cogswell	Chairman, Board of Selectmen
Jerry Wasserman	Board of Selectmen
Bob Smart	Cochair, Planning Board
Moe Handel	Cochair, Planning Board
Lee Newman	Planning Director
Nicole Bourassa	Assistant Planner
Joyce Moss	Economic Development Officer
Mark Gluesing	Design Review Board
Peter Fugere	Needham Housing Authority
Kathy Lewis	Needham Business Association
Paul Good	Chair, Needham Community Revitalization Committee
John Edgar	Economic Development Advisory Committee
Jeanne McKnight	League of Women Voters
John J. McQuillan	Business Owner
Bob Hentschel	Property Owner
Martin Batt	Citizen at Large

DiNisco Design Partnership (DDP)

Kenneth DiNisco  
Jon Oxman

---

1.     PURPOSE

- 1.1.   The purpose of this meeting was to review the results of the Community Workshop (12/11/06) and discuss locations to visit on the upcoming Field Trip.
- 1.2.   This meeting report serves as documentation of public feedback and the identification of Community Goals and Objectives for the Study Area as determined through the results of the Community Workshop. This documentation will be incorporated in the study report.

2.     COMMUNITY WORKSHOP (12/11/06)

- 2.1.   The first workshop for this study was successful in terms of a large turnout and active participation by those present. 99 people participated (including 16 DSC members and 5 members of the Study Team). It was also noted that there was a diversity of stakeholder interests as represented by the participants.

### 3. WORKSHOP PROCEDURE

- 3.1. When signing in, participants designated their stake-holder interest in the Downtown: Business Owners, Property Owners, Residents Near Center, Residents "Sort of" Near Downtown and Residents at Large. Individuals were then organized into break-out groups with other participants having the same interest.
- 3.2. DSC members acted as facilitators for each group. Following a discussion, each breakout group prioritized their responses to the following three questions:
  - What are the three best features of Needham Center?
  - What are the three worst features of Needham Center?
  - If you could do two things to improve Needham Center, what would they be?
- 3.3. Each groups' conclusions were documented on flip charts which were then presented to the entire workshop by a presenter from each group.
- 3.4. Finally, all participants were given four red dots to vote on one or more response(s) on the flip chart that they most strongly agreed with and one blue dot to place on the flip charts next to the one item they most strongly disagreed with.
- 3.5. See attached presentation and Workshop Instruction Handouts. Also, 2 DVD's of the Needham Channel broadcast of the Workshop were given to the Planning Department. These are available for review by DSC members.

### 4. ANALYSIS

- 4.1. The responses on the completed flip charts were sorted by issue to identify the different issues raised at the workshop. Based on this categorization, a summary sheet tallied the issues, showing how many groups raised each issue and the number of red and blue dots voted for each issue. A net dot score was determined by subtracting the number of blue dots from the number of red dots voted for each issue. Issues that raised the most support, either being raised by the most groups and / or garnering the highest net dot score are noted on this chart. See the attached presentation.

- 4.2. Based on the above quantitative analysis, the top ranking issues are listed below. ***Postscript: As noted below in 5.4, the Summary Chart has been revised to break out the Community Center (Greene's Field Proposal) as a separate issue under Desired Improvements.***

- **Best Features**

- Center Focus
- Train

- **Worst Features**

- Diversity of Stores
- Streetscape
- Zoning – Not to Full Potential
- Lack of Housing
- Community Space

- **Desired Improvements**

- Mixed Use / Residential Development
- Community Center
- Village Improvements
- User Friendly Permitting

5. **DISCUSSION**

- 5.1. The following clarifications and comments were made by DSC members regarding the results of the Community Workshop and the above analysis (names in parenthesis below indicates attribution of comments).

5.2. **Best Features**

- Good Demographics – This refers to the demographics of Town residents as being affluent and that this is a base of support for additional retail / restaurant development (Bob Hentschel). There also appears to be a commonality that residents want to see improvements as evidenced by strong participation in this workshop with a broad diversity of interests. There is a common voiced desire for a “village environment” (Paul Good).
- Center Focus / Train – There was a clear and consistent expression that both the Center Focus and the Train are the best features of Downtown.

5.3. **Worst Features**

- Disincentives for Property Upkeep – This issue was raised regarding the low threshold for triggering the requirement for special permits. For example, a façade upgrade to an existing storefront would trigger a special permit and business owners feel the regulatory review process is more burdensome than appropriate for this type of upkeep project.
- Empty Storefronts – This issue made the final cut in two groups. For Group 4 this issue conveyed that restrictive zoning was the cause of empty space (Jeanne McKnight).

- Inconsistency Of Architecture – This issue from Group 6 is a reference to the buildings.
- Lack Of Building Scale – This issue from Group 6 is a reference to height (Bob Smart).
- Poor Road & Sidewalk Conditions – Group 8 was specifically referencing the bad conditions at Chestnut Street.
- Lack of Clothing Stores John McQuillan pointed out that 25 years ago Needham had four men's clothing stores, all of which were lost over the course of four years. The question was raised why this happened if there is the apparent demand for this. A Joseph Aboud men's clothing retailer is going into the Needham Gateway development. Kathy Lewis raised the question if the impact of internet has impacted the bricks and mortar retail environment.
- Diversity Of Stores – It was clarified that blue dots voted on this issue were in support of more diversity of stores (Jeanne McKnight).
- Zoning This is really two issues: one is restrictive zoning and the other is a frustration with the permitting process.

#### 5.4. Desired Improvements

- Hire Community Development Officer – This suggestion was in response to the issue of Empty Storefronts and was meant to convey that the Town should take a proactive role in working with developers to improve downtown. It was pointed out that Norwood is an example of one community that has benefited from a Community Development Officer (Kathy Lewis).
- Greene's Field Proposal – This issue proposed a multi-use public facility with a YMCA, Theater, Youth and Senior Center components along with underground parking at Greene's Field. In the analysis discussed above, the Greene's Field Proposal was originally combined with Mixed-use / Residential Development, but has been revised to be a separate issue categorized as Community Center as discussed below. There was also opposition expressed against this proposal – the reason given being the loss of green space at that portion of Greene's Field off Great Plain Avenue.
- Community Center – Based on discussion with the DSC it was decided that the Greene's Field Proposal was more appropriate to be categorized as the desire for a Community Center. The desire for a Community Center was raised as an issue in Group 4 but didn't make final cut (Jeanne McKnight).
- Decongest the Center – Traffic / Parking – This issue made the final cut for Group 4, but there were no red dots supporting it and 3 blue dots voting against it. Although not making the final cut, Group 4 also expressed a resistance to development downtown (Jeanne McKnight).
- Livelier And Cleaner Downtown – This issue refers to the participants' view that the Town needs to be more responsible for maintaining the public way (Moe Handel).
- Evening Activities – This issue came up in more groups than final flip charts suggest (Moe Handel).

- Mixed – Use Projects / Locations for Socializing – Consistent with the public's desire for mixed-use projects and a community center downtown, is the desire amongst Town residents for convenient locations for socializing. Mixed-use projects will be great for providing these opportunities but the schedule for these projects will be controlled by developers and most likely are a 10-15 year time frame. In addition to the Greene's Field location, other possibilities include Walgreens site, the theater block and a project involving a parking structure at the Needham Junction site that would be shared with a new YMCA adjacent to it. There should be more immediate action to provide locations for socializing, in +/- 3-year time frame (Paul Good).

More immediate possibilities include renovation of Town Hall to include community space. The Selectmen have postponed their decision on Town Hall renovations pending the conclusions of this study.

6. NEEDHAM ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OFFICER

- 6.1. Joyce Moss was introduced as the Economic Development Specialist for Needham, which is a new position in the Town. Joyce will be joining the DSC.

7. GRANTS AVAILABLE FOR CULTURAL FACILITIES

- 7.1. Joyce Moss informed the DSC that there are now state grants available from the Massachusetts Cultural Council for feasibility studies, design assistance and construction of cultural facilities. The deadline for the current round of grants is February 1 and March 15.

8. FIELD TRIP

- 8.1. The next meeting of the DSC will be the field trip on 24 January 2007.
- 8.2. There was discussion of the most appropriate communities to visit. Possibilities in Massachusetts include: Attleboro, Mashpee, Waltham, Quincy, Natick, Lowell, Concord, Newton, Wellesley, Canton, Norwood and Lexington. In addition East Greenwich, Rhode Island was also suggested.
- 8.3. Itinerary and schedule TBD.

---

The discussions of this meeting are recorded as understood by the writer. Please advise the writer of any omissions or corrections.



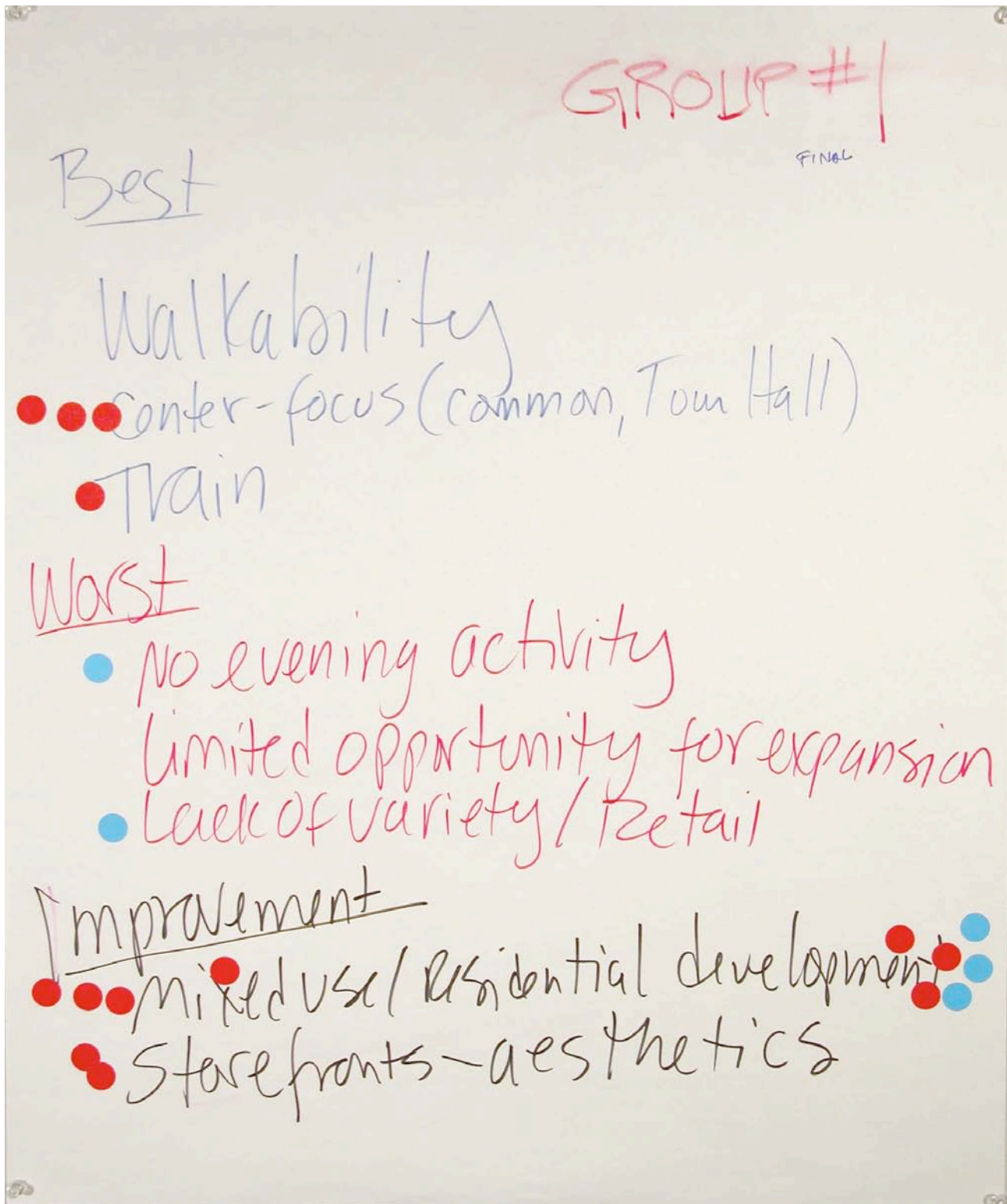
---

Jon Oxman AIA  
DiNISCO DESIGN

JAO/

cc: DSC  
Kenneth DiNisco  
Richard Rice

Enclosure: 1. Presentation: DSC Meeting (01/10/07).  
2. Handouts: Community Workshop Agenda and Instructions for  
Participants and Facilitators (12/11/06).  
3. Attendance Community Workshop Sign-In and Break Out Group  
Participant Lists (12/11/06)



BEST

Group 2  
FINAL

- ① WE HAVE OUR OWN/EASY ACCESS  
TO COMMUTER RAIL INTO BOSTON
- ② DEFINED TOWN CENTER
- ③ GOOD DEMOGRAPHICS

WORST

- ① ZONING - NOT TO FULL POTENTIAL  
- HEIGHT & USAGE
- ② LACK OF HOUSING IN TOWN CENTER
- ③ POOR VARIETY OF RETAIL

ACTION: CONSIDER UNDERGROUND PARKING  
CHANGE ZONING RESTRICTIONS



Best

GROUP 3  
FINAL


- TOWN CENTER / common
- TRAIN
- DIVERSITY OF STORES

Worst

- RESTRICTIVE ZONING
- PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE
- DISINCENTIVE for PROPERTY  
UPKEEP

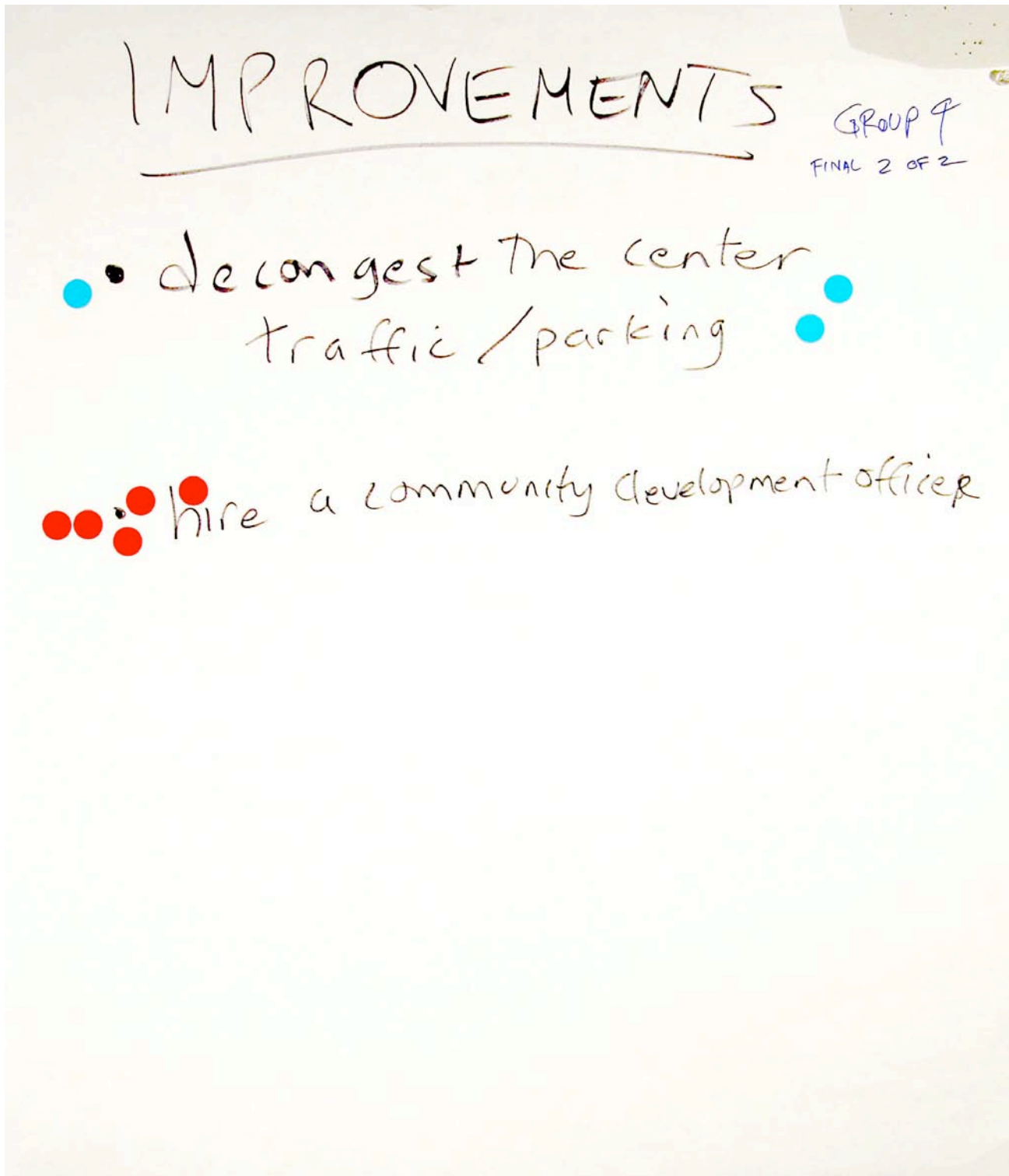
Improve

- Town Hall Rehab offices
- User friendly permitting

 town has a center  
With a town hall

Group 4  
FINAL 1 of 2

- train / bus
- Outdoor dining on chapel St.
- too much traffic
- empty storefronts due to restrictive zoning
- no curb appeal - landscaping  
- consistency



## Best Features

FINAL  
GROUP (5)  
1 OF 3

Public Buildings / Green space

Comuter rail

- Accesibility / walking

- Convenient Parking ●

5  
FINAL 2 OF 3

# Worst Features

- Pedestrian unfriendly ●●●  
(narrow sidewalks - pedestrian patterns)
- Empty storefronts/Lack of retail diversity ●
- Lack of trees/landscaping ●●●●
- Lack of indoor community space and entertainment





 **Best** Group 6 FINAL

Needham Comm + Town Hall  
Commuter Rail  
• Good local merchants

---

worst

Traffic, Parking + Pedestrian Flow Issues •

 Inconsistency of Architecture.

 Unbalanced Detail Mix

---

to improve

 Broader Mixed Use (Smart growth) 

 Structured Parking

 Charming Village Look •

(including: Broader walkways  
bike racks  
sitting areas)

TABLE 7  
FINAL

POSITIVE

- SENSE OF COMMUNITY
- TOWN COMMON
- TOWN HALL

NEGATIVE

- IMBALANCE OF RETAIL
- LACK OF BUILDING SCALE
- LACK OF RESIDENTIAL SPACE IN TOWN CENTER

TO IMPROVE

- MULTI USE/STORY BUILDINGS W/  
UNDERGROUND PARKING
- DEVELOP GREEN FIELD AS MULTI-USE PUBLIC  
FACILITY W/ UNDERGROUND PARKING  
(YMCA, THEATRE/PERFORMANCE, YOUTH + SENIOR  
FACILITY)



group 8  
FINAL

+  
s

- 1) Town Hall and surrounding streets & common
- 2) Public Transportation
- 3) Restaurants & Variety of services & retail (e.g. medical & more)

minuses  
s

- 1) Lack of public performance & meeting space
- 2) Lack of clothing stores
- 3) Poor Road & sidewalk conditions along Chestnut

Wish List

- Expand Chapel St Plaza & increase building height
- Livelier & Cleaner Downtown

Community Workshop #1 Issues Analysis  
Needham Downtown Study

Sorted by Group				
Issue #	Issue	Group	Red Dots	Blue Dots
	<b>Best Features of Downtown</b>			
1	Walkability	Group # 1		
2	Center-focus (Common, Town Hall)	Group # 1	3	
3	Train	Group # 1	1	
2	Defined Town Center	Group # 2	4	
3	Easy access to commuter rail To Boston	Group # 2	1	
4	Good demographics	Group # 2		
2	Town Center / Common	Group # 3	4	
3	Train	Group # 3		
5	Diversity of Stores	Group # 3		6
2	Town has a Center with a Town Hall	Group # 4		
3	Train / bus	Group # 4		
6	Outdoor dining on Chapel Street	Group # 4		
1	Accessibility / walking	Group # 5	1	
2	Public buildings / green space	Group # 5		
3	Commuter rail	Group # 5		
7	Convenient parking	Group # 5	1	1
2	Needham Common & Town Hall	Group # 6	12	
3	Commuter Rail	Group # 6		
5	Good local merchants	Group # 6	1	
2	Town Common	Group # 7		
2	Town Hall	Group # 7		
8	Sense of community	Group # 7	1	
2	Town Hall & surrounding streets & common	Group # 8	5	
3	Public Transportation	Group # 8	1	
5	Restaurants & variety of services ( medical & professional) & retail	Group # 8	2	1

Community Workshop #1 Issues Analysis  
Needham Downtown Study

Sorted by Group				
Issue #	Issue	Group	Red Dots	Blue Dots
	<b>Worst Features of Downtown</b>			
1	No evening activity	Group # 1		1
2	Limited opportunity for expansion	Group # 1		
3	Lack of variety / retail	Group # 1		1
3	Poor Variety of Retail	Group # 2	3	3
4	Zoning - Not to full potential	Group # 2	15	
5	Lack of Housing in Town Center	Group # 2	8	
4	Restrictive Zoning	Group # 3	1	
6	Public Infrastructure	Group # 3	1	
7	Disincentive for Property Upkeep	Group # 3	2	
8	Too much traffic	Group # 4	1	
9	Empty storefronts due to restrictive zoning	Group # 4	1	
10	No curb appeal - landscaping consistency	Group # 4	2	
9	Empty storefronts / Lack of retail diversity	Group # 5	1	
10	Pedestrian unfriendly (Narrow sidewalks - pedestrian patterns)	Group # 5		3
10	Lack of trees / landscaping	Group # 5	4	
11	Lack of indoor community space and entertainment	Group # 5		
3	Unbalanced retail mix	Group # 6	5	1
8	Traffic, parking & pedestrian flow issues	Group # 6		1
10	Inconsistency of Architecture	Group # 6		4
3	Imbalance of retail	Group # 7	4	
5	Lack of residential space in Town Center	Group # 7	10	
10	Lack of building scale	Group # 7		
3	Lack of clothing stores	Group # 8	1	1
11	Lack of public performance & meeting space	Group # 8	20	
12	Poor road & sidewalk conditions along Chestnut Street	Group # 8	4	

Community Workshop #1 Issues Analysis  
Needham Downtown Study

Sorted by Group				
Issue #	Issue	Group	Red Dots	Blue Dots
	<b>Desired Improvements</b>			
1	Mixed-use / residential development	Group # 1	7	3
3	Storefronts - aesthetics	Group # 1	2	
4	Underground parking	Group # 2	1	
5	Change Zoning restrictions	Group # 2		
6	User friendly permitting	Group # 3	20	
7	Town Hall - Renovate offices	Group # 3	3	5
8	Decongest the Center - Traffic / parking	Group # 4		3
9	Hire a community development officer	Group # 4	5	
5	Multi (3) -story buildings	Group # 5	3	
10	Landscaping / architecture	Group # 5	11	1
1	Broader mixed-use (Smart growth)	Group # 6	15	
4	Structured parking	Group # 6	3	1
10	Charming village look (Broader walkways, bike racks, sitting areas)	Group # 6	12	
1	Multi-use / story buildings w/ underground parking	Group # 7	12	
2	Develop Greene's Field as multi-use public facility w/ underground parking (YMCA, theatre / performance, youth & senior facility)	Group # 7	23	13
10	Expand Chapel Street Plaza & Increase Building Height	Group # 8	3	
10	Livelier & cleaner downtown	Group # 8	1	

Community Workshop #1 Issues Analysis  
Needham Downtown Study

Sorted by Issue				
Issue #	Issue	Group	Red Dots	Blue Dots
	<b>Best Features of Downtown</b>			
1	Walkability	Group # 1		
1	Accessibility / walking	Group # 5	1	
2	Center-focus (Common, Town Hall)	Group # 1	3	
2	Defined Town Center	Group # 2	4	
2	Town Center / Common	Group # 3	4	
2	Town has a Center with a Town Hall	Group # 4		
2	Public buildings / green space	Group # 5		
2	Needham Common & Town Hall	Group # 6	12	
2	Town Common	Group # 7		
2	Town Hall	Group # 7		
2	Town Hall & surrounding streets & common	Group # 8	5	
3	Train	Group # 1	1	
3	Easy access to commuter rail To Boston	Group # 2	1	
3	Train	Group # 3		
3	Train / bus	Group # 4		
3	Commuter rail	Group # 5		
3	Commuter Rail	Group # 6		
3	Public Transportation	Group # 8	1	
4	Good demographics	Group # 2		
5	Diversity of Stores	Group # 3		6
5	Good local merchants	Group # 6	1	
5	Restaurants & variety of services ( medical & professional) & retail	Group # 8	2	1
6	Outdoor dining on Chapel Street	Group # 4		
7	Convenient parking	Group # 5	1	1
8	Sense of community	Group # 7	1	

Community Workshop #1 Issues Analysis  
Needham Downtown Study

Sorted by Issue				
Issue #	Issue	Group	Red Dots	Blue Dots
	<b>Worst Features of Downtown</b>			
1	No evening activity	Group # 1		1
2	Limited opportunity for expansion	Group # 1		
3	Lack of variety / retail	Group # 1		1
3	Poor Variety of Retail	Group # 2	3	3
3	Unbalanced retail mix	Group # 6	5	1
3	Imbalance of retail	Group # 7	4	
3	Lack of clothing stores	Group # 8	1	1
4	Zoning - Not to full potential	Group # 2	15	
4	Restrictive Zoning	Group # 3	1	
5	Lack of Housing in Town Center	Group # 2	8	
5	Lack of residential space in Town Center	Group # 7	10	
6	Public Infrastructure	Group # 3	1	
7	Disincentive for Property Upkeep	Group # 3	2	
8	Too much traffic	Group # 4	1	
8	Traffic, parking & pedestrian flow issues	Group # 6		1
9	Empty storefronts due to restrictive zoning	Group # 4	1	
9	Empty storefronts / Lack of retail diversity	Group # 5	1	
10	No curb appeal - landscaping consistency	Group # 4	2	
10	Pedestrian unfriendly (Narrow sidewalks - pedestrian patterns)	Group # 5		3
10	Lack of trees / landscaping	Group # 5	4	
10	Inconsistency of Architecture	Group # 6		4
10	Lack of building scale	Group # 7		
11	Lack of indoor community space and entertainment	Group # 5		
11	Lack of public performance & meeting space	Group # 8	20	
12	Poor road & sidewalk conditions along Chestnut Street	Group # 8	4	

Community Workshop #1 Issues Analysis  
Needham Downtown Study

Sorted by Issue				
Issue #	Issue	Group	Red Dots	Blue Dots
	<b>Desired Improvements</b>			
1	Mixed-use / residential development	Group # 1	7	3
1	Broader mixed-use (Smart growth)	Group # 6	15	
1	Multi-use / story buildings w/ underground parking	Group # 7	12	
2	Develop Greene's Field as multi-use public facility w/ underground parking (YMCA, theatre / performance, youth & senior facility)	Group # 7	23	13
3	Storefronts - aesthetics	Group # 1	2	
4	Underground parking	Group # 2	1	
4	Structured parking	Group # 6	3	1
5	Change Zoning restrictions	Group # 2		
5	Multi (3) -story buildings	Group # 5	3	
6	User friendly permitting	Group # 3	20	
7	Town Hall - Renovate offices	Group # 3	3	5
8	Decongest the Center - Traffic / parking	Group # 4		3
9	Hire a community development officer	Group # 4	5	
10	Landscaping / architecture	Group # 5	11	1
10	Charming village look (Broader walkways, bike racks, sitting areas)	Group # 6	12	
10	Expand Chapel Street Plaza & Increase Building Height	Group # 8	3	
10	Livelier & cleaner downtown	Group # 8	1	

Breadth of Support For Issue	Issues	Group # 1 Business Owners		Group # 2 Property Owners		Group # 3 Property Owners		Group # 4 Residents Near Center		Group # 5 Residents Near Center		Group # 6 Residents at Large		Group # 7 Residents at Large		Group # 8 Residents "Sort of" Near Center		TOTALS		
		Red Dots	Blue Dots	Red Dots	Blue Dots	Red Dots	Blue Dots	Red Dots	Blue Dots	Red Dots	Blue Dots	Red Dots	Blue Dots	Red Dots	Blue Dots	Red Dots	Blue Dots	Red Dots	Blue Dots	Net
***** *****	<b>Best Features</b>																			
	1 Walkability	0	0							1	0							1	0	1
	2 Center Focus	3	0	4	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	12	0	0	0	5	0	28	0	28
	3 Train	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0			1	0	3	0	3
	4 Good Demographics			0	0													0	0	0
	5 Diversity of Stores					0	(6)					1	0			2	(1)	3	(7)	(4)
	6 Outdoor Dining							0	0									0	0	0
	7 Convenient Parking									1	(1)							1	(1)	0
	8 Sense of Community													1	0			1	0	1
	TOTALS	4	0	5	0	4	(6)	0	0	2	(1)	13	0	1	0	8	(1)	37	(8)	29
***	<b>Worst Features</b>																			
	1 No Evening Activities	0	(1)															0	(1)	(1)
	2 Limited Expansion	0	0															0	0	0
	3 Diversity of Stores	0	(1)	3	(3)							5	(1)	4	0	1	(1)	13	(6)	7
	4 Zoning - Not to Full Potential			15	0	1	0											16	0	16
	5 Lack of Housing			8	0									10	0			18	0	18
	6 Public Infrastructure					1	0											1	0	1
	7 Disincentive for Upkeep					2	0											2	0	2
	8 Traffic							1	0			0	(1)					1	(1)	0
	9 Empty Storefronts							1	0	1	0							2	0	2
	10 Streetscape							2	0	4	(3)	0	(4)	0	0			6	(7)	(1)
	11 Community Space									0	0					20	0	20	0	20
	12 Road & Sidewalk Conditions															4	0	4	0	4
	TOTALS	0	(2)	26	(3)	4	0	4	0	5	(3)	5	(6)	14	0	25	(1)	83	(15)	68
**	<b>Desired Improvements</b>																			
	1 Mixed Use / Residential Development	7	(3)									15	0	12	0			34	(3)	31
	2 Community Center													23	(13)			23	(13)	10
	3 Storefront Aesthetics	2	0															2	0	2
	4 Parking			1	0							3	(1)					4	(1)	3
	5 Zoning			0	0					3	0							3	0	3
	6 User Friendly Permitting					20	0											20	0	20
	7 Renovate Town Hall Offices					3	(5)											3	(5)	(2)
	8 Traffic							0	(3)									0	(3)	(3)
	9 Community Development Officer							5	0									5	0	5
	10 Village Improvements									11	1	12	0			4	0	27	1	28
	TOTALS	9	(3)	1	0	23	(5)	5	(3)	14	1	30	(1)	35	(13)	4	0	121	(24)	97



# Issues - **Best Features**

## \*\*\*\*\* **Center Focus** (28)

---

- Center-focus (Common, Town Hall)
- Defined Town Center
- Town Center / Common
- Town has a Center with a Town Hall
- Public buildings / green space
- Needham Common & Town Hall
- Town Common
- Town Hall
- Town Hall & surrounding streets & Common

# Issues - **Best Features**

## \*\*\*\* **Train**

---

- Train
- Easy access to commuter rail to Boston
- Train
- Train / bus
- Commuter rail
- Commuter rail
- Public transportation

# Issues - **Worst Features**

## \*\*\* **Diversity of Stores**

---

- Lack of variety / retail
- Poor variety of retail
- Unbalanced retail mix
- Imbalance of retail
- Lack of clothing stores

# Issues - **Worst Features**

## **\*\* Streetscape**

---

- No curb appeal - landscaping consistency
- Pedestrian unfriendly (Narrow sidewalks - pedestrian patterns)
- Lack of trees / landscaping
- Inconsistency of architecture
- Lack of building scale

# Issues - **Worst Features**

## **Zoning - Not to Full Potential**

16

- Zoning - Not to full potential
- Restrictive zoning

## **Lack of Housing**

18

- Lack of housing in Town Center
- Lack of residential space in Town Center

# Issues - Worst Features

## Community Space (20)

---

- Lack of indoor community space & entertainment
- Lack of public performance & meeting space

# Issues - **Desired Improvements**

31

## **\*\* Mixed Use / Residential Development**

- Mixed-use / residential development
- Broader mixed-use (Smart growth)
- Multi-use / story buildings w/ underground parking
- Develop Greene's Field as multi-use public facility w/ underground parking (YMCA, theater / performance, youth & senior facility)

# Issues - **Desired Improvements**

## **Community Center**

10

- Develop Greene's Field as multi-use public facility w/ underground parking (YMCA, theater / performance, youth & senior facility)



# Issues - **Desired Improvements**

## **\*\* Village Improvements** (28)

---

- Landscaping / architecture
- Charming village look (Broader walkways, bike racks, sitting areas)
- Expand Chapel Street Plaza & Increase Building Height
- Livelier & cleaner downtown

## **User Friendly Permitting** (20)

---

- User friendly permitting

# Issues - Questions

- Worst Feature regarding Diversity of Stores is NOT on addressed on Desired Improvements List. Why?

# **Imagine Needham Center**

Town-wide Visioning Session  
Needham Center Study Committee  
December 11, 2006

## **Agenda**

- 7:15pm**      **Introduction and Welcome**  
**Description of the Planning Process**  
*Robert T. Smart, Jr., Needham Planning Board and Vice-Chair,  
Needham Center Planning Study Committee*
- 7:25pm**      **Purpose of Visioning**  
**Presentation of Preliminary Study Area Data**  
*Ken Dinisco, DiNisco Design Partnership*
- 7:45pm**      **Questions and Answers**
- 8:00pm**      **Small Group Discussion**
- Identification of assets and liabilities, key issues
  - Prioritization of issues
  - Create a “vision for Needham Center”
- 9:10pm**      **Report Back to Large Group**
- 9:40pm**      **Closing Comments and Next Steps**

## **STARTING A DIALOG ON NEEDHAM CENTER**

### **Town-wide Visioning Session**

---

Needham Center Study Committee  
December 11, 2006

The following outlines the interactive part of the Visioning Workshop on Needham Center. The intent of this specific way of carrying out that part of the agenda is to provide structure and stimulation for participants, to make it easy to get everyone involved, and to produce a real “product,” not just many sheets of flip chart notes. As outlined, it would take about an hour and a half for the following five steps.

- A. Organizing into groups that start out from different policy inclinations.
- B. Groups are instructed to respond to the same set of questions on Needham Center.
- C. Discussion and prioritization of responses within small groups.
- D. Small groups report back to each other.
- E. “Red dot voting” on the small group products.

#### **A. ORGANIZING INTO GROUPS**

Those attending the workshop will be divided into groups of about a dozen people each, either randomly or quickly differentiated based on inclination, depending upon timing and number of persons participating.

#### **B. QUESTIONS FOR INDIVIDUALS GROUPS TO ANSWER**

- What are the three best features of Needham Center?
- What are the three worst features of Needham Center? That is, what should we work to change or improve?
- If you could do two things to improve Needham Center, what would they be?

In answering the above questions think about Needham Center as it is now (and, perhaps, as you remember it from years ago), and imagine how it might change to reach its full potential. Think about changes in land use, building siting and design, provisions for off-street parking, traffic patterns, sidewalks and pathways, and Town buildings and facilities. From the community’s standpoint, some of these changes might be positive while others might be detrimental.

#### **C. DISCUSSION AND PRIORITIZATION**

In the group meetings, each person in turn offers (and a scribe records on a flip chart) his or her response to the individual question. The group then discusses, in turn, best features, worst features, and actions. Finally, by concurrence or, if time demands it, by voting the group selects three positive features, three negative features, and two actions for later reporting.

#### **D. REPORTING BACK**

Each group then makes a brief presentation (three or four minutes) of both their selections and the highlights of how they got there, plus any other key observations.

#### **E. RED DOT VOTING**

The group flip chart sheets will then be displayed on a wall. Everyone attending will be given four or five red sticky dots to place as “votes” wherever they wish (e.g. all on one item or one on each of four), plus one blue “negative” dot to use to record strong opposition to something that is on the wall. The results of that voting will later be summarized in a report that goes back to participants and others.

## SMALL GROUP FACILITATION: NEEDHAM CENTER WORKSHOP

---

Needham Center Study Committee  
December 11, 2006

This outline is intended to make sure the facilitators start with the same understanding of our intentions for the breakout group discussions. The facilitator's job is to lead process, but not content. The role is to enable everyone's initial feelings about Needham Center to be heard, and then finding and documenting agreements. It is NOT to be an expert on how things are in Needham or what things the Town should do. The job of the facilitator will require careful use of time, making people comfortable in speaking rather than just listening, and assuring that no one, least of all the facilitator, dominates the conversation. These are the steps in the process as designed, although contingencies of the evening might alter them.

1. **Start-up.** Introduce yourself, and then clarify the "ground rules" for this particular discussion. These should be among them.

- Everyone's ideas are "good:" there are no wrong or unworthy answers.
- People should neither interrupt others as they speak nor carry on side conversations.
- No fair asking pointed questions or snickering.
- It is okay for people to "pass" when it is their turn to speak, and to speak later, but participants should be discouraged from just listening.

*5 minutes elapsed.*

2. **Organize.** Get agreement on someone to record ideas on flip charts, and agree on how a group reporter will be identified, probably but not necessarily at the end of your meeting. Maybe select a timekeeper.

*10 minutes (cumulatively) elapsed.*

3. **Collect first thoughts.**

- (a) Go around the group and ask each person in turn to briefly introduce himself or herself.
- (b) Briefly review the questions and the process to be followed during the course of the evening. In answering the questions ask participants to think about Needham Center as it is now (and, perhaps, as they remember it from years ago), and to imagine how it might change to reach its full potential. Instruct them to think about changes in land use, building siting and design, provisions for off-street parking, traffic patterns, sidewalks and pathways, and Town buildings and facilities. From the community's standpoint, some of these changes might be positive while others might be detrimental.

*15 minutes (cumulatively) elapsed.*

4. **Questions.** Open the floor to discussion on each respective question by having each person in turn offer (and a scribe record on a flip chart) his or her response to the individual question. Each question should be recorded on a different sheet, ideally condensed in verbatim lettering so that all nominations will legibly fit onto a minimum number of sheets. Once all responses have been obtained on an individual question open the floor to discussion, looking for convergence or conflicts, then trying to get concurrence. In the case of the first two questions the three highest priorities should be identified, by vote if necessary. On the last question the two top priorities should be identified, similarly by vote if necessary.

Focus on agreement, not on resolving disagreement. Find where substantial concurrence exists or is easily achieved, and consolidate it. Where there is disagreement, don't dwell on it, but rather simply agree on how to find agreement at some future time, and move on. Be careful to accept outcomes of the process even if not individually agreeing with some parts of it, unless the disagreement is one of fundamental principle.

*60 minutes (cumulatively) elapsed.*

5. **Wind up.** Have the group select a presenter if it didn't earlier. The presenter shouldn't be the facilitator. Have the eight selected items transcribed onto a single sheet, with best features in RED, worst features in BLUE, and actions in GREEN. Attach a list of your group members to the sheet. Roll up and identify the other sheets the group produced. Congratulate yourself for maintaining your cool!

*70 minutes (cumulatively) elapsed.*

If you have done your job well you will have a little bit of spare time, everyone in the group will be happy and charged up, and the "products" will reflect thoughtful input.

## Group #2

Joe Scalia

89 Canterbury Lane 02492

Jane Howard  
Carol de Lemos

Tami & CHRIS MAXWELL

127 ARDMORE RD

NEEDHAM 02494

Nick Coppola / c/o FOM, LLC

16-24 Chestnut St

Needham 02492

Bob Hentschel

11 Parkman Way

Needham, MA 02492

Lev Lee Trust  
Mike Sokolowski

73 Chestnut St

Needham, MA 02492

Susan McGarvey

66 Upland Rd

Needham, MA 02492

Susan.McGarvey@rcn.com



## GROUP #2

Mon Dec 11  
'06

Judith Frisbie (CONTINUED)  
259 Hillcrest Rd.  
Needham 02492

Have a defined center

Housing convenient to transport & stores

Improve parking - many small shops  
+ town requires parking per store  
So people go to mall (leave Needham  
to do shopping)

\* Kinds of stores in Needham —  
many are the same type of businesses  
(Because due to parking limits - certain  
TYPES of Businesses are excluded)  
consider underground parking

Planning Bd. - multi stories

# Group #3

## ATTENDES

- 1 Greg Petriani
- 2 Bill Day
- 3 Steve Heffernan
- 4 Chris Lynch
- 5 Sheila McDonough
- 6 MICHAEL HEFFERNAN
- 7 Bob Boyd
- 8 BRIAN HEFFERNAN
- 9
- 10

Table #4

Bill Cotington 251 Dedham Ave  
Marcia Fredlich "

James Hugh Sowers

Phyllis Fanger

Annet Hayer

Regina Ballinger 53 Marshall St

Jean Claffin

Bruce Claffin

Daryl Chan 9 Park Ave

Jeanne Mc Knight (arrived at 8:30)

# Table 5

Juan W. Abbott  
Jeff Helber  
Bruce T. Eisenhut

Stephen Ng  
Mimi Chiu  
Dahla Mason  
Sylvia Rose  
Nancy Irwin  
Carolyn McDoer  
Jean Connolly

# Group 6

<u>Name</u>	<u>tel/#</u>	<u>Email</u>
Andrew Arenella	453-0035	andrew.arenella@gmail.com
PAUL ATTRIDGE	781-444-6745	attridge@comcast.net
Deborah Robinson	781-449-1845	deborah.r.robinson@att.net
NINA SILVERSTEIN	781-444-2994	
Erwin Silverstein	781-444-2994	
George Kent	781-444-8649	g.kent@neu.edu
W. M. Powers	781-444-2644	wmsalpowa@comcast.net
Sally Powers	781-444-2644	
William J. Tedaldi	781-449-1073	WJTedaldi@rcn.com
Michael Crowe	781-449-2960	mcrotj@rcn.com
Carl Shapiro	781-449-5249	cs Shapiro@rcn.com

# TABLE 7

Bob Smart

JEFF KRISTELLER

RON & LOIS SACKOL

Jack Howard

Earl de Lemos

Maria Elena Lynch

PAN NORMAN

Les Kalish

Faye Remnick

Mark Glueck

# GROUP 8

## Needham Center Study Committee

Workshop Facilitator Assignments

December 11, 2006

### Table 1

John McQuillan

Kate Fitzpatrick

### Table 2

Robert Hentschel

Peter Fugere

### Table 3

John Edgar

### Table 4

Kathy Lewis

Peter Friedenberg

### Table 5

Jack Cogswell

### Table 6

Jerry Wasserman

### Table 7

Robert T. Smart, Jr.

### Table 8

Moe Handel

### Table 9

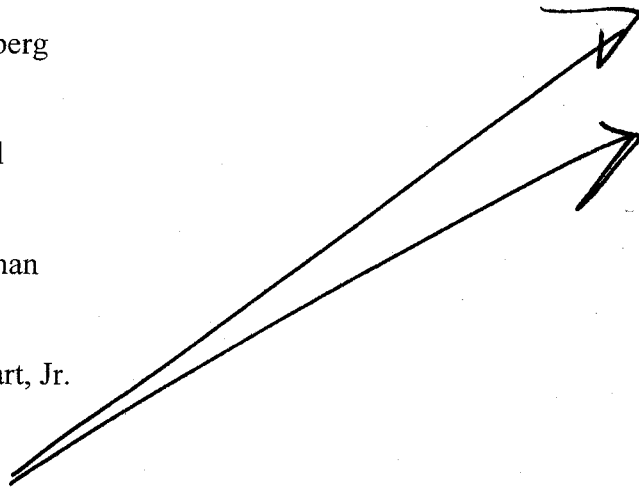
Mark Gluesing

### Table 10

Paul Goode

Lee Newman

Kay Mastao  
Mary Hunt  
Meredith Papp  
Mike Greis  
John Masterman  
Mickey Goldin  
Nick Hurwitz  
Moetta Del  
Clare Messing



# NEEDHAM DOWNTOWN STUDY

## WORKSHOP 1

### Sign-In Sheet

Name	Address	Email	Specify: property owner, business owner, resident near center, or resident away from center
James Hugh Powers	263 Nehalem St, Apt. F 100	none	Tony Brando F Target
James Speer	70 Harting St. Melrose	none	Business owner rep.
Susan McGarvey	66 Upland Rd.	SusanMcgarvey@rcn.com	property owner
Phyllis Fanger	21 Oakland Ave. Apt. F		Resident nr. center.
Joseph Scialia	99 Canterbury Ln	SPSCALIA@COMCAST.NET	PROPERTY OWNER
Deborah Robinson	127 Norsett Rd.	deborah.r.robinson@att.net	resident - away from center
Daryl Cohan	9 Park Ave	daryl.cohan@removes.com	resident near center, reactor
Susan Richards	64 Coolidge Ave.	BlacksheepKnitting@verizon.net	business owner
Sally Powers	47 Scott St		
Regina Ballinger	53 Mansfield St	ballingerfs@comcast.net	Resident near
Andrew Arenella	27 Morley St	andrew.Arenella@gmail.com	RES. AWAY
Town Square	44 Reservoir Ave		res away
BOB LARSEN	150 TUDOR RD		BUS OWN / RESID AWAY
Marcia Fredlich	251 Dedham Ave	mfredlich@rcn.com	near center
Bill Codington	251 Dedham Ave	gizm05@rcn.com	"
Amet Hayek	116 Maple St.	ahayek@bigfoot.com	property owner near center
William J. Tedoldi	68 High St.	WJTedoldi@rcn.com	resident near center
Sheila Pransky	100 Mayflower Rd.	sgpransky@Comcast.net	Needham Housing
Fred Hartman	919 Great Plain Ave		Property owner
Mr. Norman	257 Canterbury Way	Mr. R. NORMAN@GMAIL.COM	PROPERTY AND BUSINESS
Mr. Locke	611 Greenfield Ave		Resident
Bill Day	94 Oxbow	bday@needhambank.com	"
CLARENCE MERS	50 Chestnut St	cmers@murphymanus.com	Business Owner
Jane Howard	119 Green St	jhoward@mountida.edu	Property owner
Greg Petrin	187 Albany St	glp@petrinicorp.com	prop. owner



# NEEDHAM DOWNTOWN STUDY

## WORKSHOP 1

### Sign-In Sheet

Name	Address	Email	Specify: property owner, business owner, resident near center, or resident away from center
Robert Boyd	415 WARREN		Property owner
Mike Counts	36 Standish Rd	mcrouty@rcn.com	away from center
Chris Maxwell	127 ARDRE Rd		PROPERTY
Judith Farsby	259 Hillcrest Rd		Property owner
Bruce Clafflin	229 Garden St		Property owner
Dean Clafflin	229 Garden St.		Property owner
PAUL ATTRIDGE	39 POWERS ST	attridge@comcast.net	
Carl Shapiro	43 Falcon St	CS Shapiro@rcn.com	
Mike Sokolowski	73 Chestnut St.	mikes@newtonorientalrugs.com	property owner
NINA SILVERSTEIN	44 Reservoir Ave		resident away
Joe Barnes	589 High Rock St		resident away
JEFF KRISTELLER	138 ELMWOOD RD		Res AWAY
Les Kalish	386 Central Ave		Res away
Maria Chin	153 Grant St		
MICHAEL HEFFERNAN	99 WILKINSON RD		Property owner
John Kraemer	99 School St. Needham		Police Dept.
Sheila McDonough	239 Trailside Way		Property owner
Brian Heffernan	36 Cook St. Westboro MA	bheffernan@northeastplanning.com	
Tom Lerry	99 School St.		Police DEPT.
Susan W. Abbott	60 Otis St.	sswabbott@rcn.com	property owner/near center
Ernesto Merzon	470 Dedmon Ave	Rmerson@Tamm.Needham.MA.US	Police Dept
Lara Sokol	644 Greendale	LSOCKOL@comcast.net	property owner
Nancy Irwin	145 Mont St		resident
Bruce Eisenhut	106 Maricea Pier Rd	b.eisenhut@massbba.org	near center
Jack McGeorge	1063 G.P. Ave		

## Sign-In Sheet

[illegible]

## Sign-In Sheet

[illegible]